

Beat: News

## “India Is Committed To Achieve Universal Health Coverage For All Age Groups”

### JP Nadda In 68th World Health Assembly

Geneva, 18.05.2015, 13:26 Time

**USPA NEWS** - The Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare, Mr. Jagat Prakash Nadda addressing the Commonwealth Health Ministers’ Meeting, at the 68th World Health Assembly 2015, in Geneva on May 17, 2015. He said that the Commonwealth can make a contribution by way of sharing best practices.

“We believe that investment in universal health coverage, including for aged population, should be considered as a smart investment for future. India is committed to achieve universal health coverage for all age groups. India has charted a path that depends largely on provision of affordable, quality health care through the public health system as its main form of social protection, with supplementation from the private sector to close gaps’. Union Minister for Health & Family Welfare Mr. JP Nadda said this while addressing at the Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting at the 68th World Health Assembly 2015, in Geneva on the theme “Universal health coverage, with an emphasis on ageing and good health’ on May 17.

Some excerpts from the Minister’s address:

“I feel privileged in addressing this august gathering at the Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting. I bring greetings to all of you from 1.25 billion people of India.

Commonwealth is home to 2.2 billion people across 53 countries, with over 60% under the age of 30. In this context, the theme of the discussion today, i.e. “Universal health coverage, with an emphasis on ageing and good health’ is quite appropriate.

Publicly financed insurance mechanisms have been deployed to supplement public sector care for the unorganized workers. Organized workers are covered under the Employees Insurance Scheme and Central Government Health Scheme. Private sector insurance is also gaining a strong foothold in the country. Our main challenge is to further expand health insurance mechanisms, as it currently covers only a small percentage of the population.

India has a comparatively young population “with about 66% of population below the age of 35. This is one of the many strengths of India now. We are also cognizant of the potential challenge in the next three decades as this age group would move into the category of older persons.

In recognition of this challenge, we are continuously devising new policy interventions that include social and human, as well as economic investments, to realize healthy living among aged persons. The National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly is currently implemented in 100 districts of 21 states. This programme is addressing with the primary objective of providing easy access to preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative services for the elderly. Eight Regional Geriatric Centres and a number of Geriatric Clinics have also started operating in the country.

The Government has also introduced a number of path-breaking policy reforms to improve provider-to-population ratio. We introduced measures to recruit and deploy more skilled health providers in rural and remote areas, where majority of older persons reside. The public health workforce in rural areas has been increased by over 100,000 providers and over 900,000 community health women volunteers, to provide community level care and facilitation. The government is also exploring alternative service providers such as Rural Medical Assistants, nurse practitioners, and family medicine specialists that are more appropriate to our needs.

We have taken up universal access to drugs and diagnostics through public sector outlets as a priority. We have also established Sector Innovation Council for the health sector for stimulating and building favourable eco-systems to address health innovation needs.

We are also encouraging public private partnerships to improve investments and access to health services. Over 14,000 publicly

financed ambulances are in position to shift over 100,000 emergencies daily on a completely cashless basis.

As part of the solution for attaining good health, including for the ageing population, traditional systems of medicine and natural therapies have an immense role. Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi gave a call in the United Nations General Assembly in September last year to recognize Yoga, among other things, as a provider of holistic approach to health and well-being. We are happy to note that the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution, with co-sponsorship from 177 countries, to observe 21st June as the International day of Yoga.

The Commonwealth can make a contribution by way of sharing best practices in critical areas essential to augment the health system capacity. Some of these areas, I would like to emphasize, include health financing; health services administration; appropriate use of available medical technology; and access to essential drugs including a robust supply chain management.

Cooperation in medical education and training is also needed within Commonwealth to enhance availability of scientifically talented professionals across the countries`.

**Article online:**

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-4132/india-is-committed-to-achieve-universal-health-coverage-for-all-age-groups.html>

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V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSIV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Doruvu Paul Jagan Babu

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619